

THE WALDORF HAND WORK & CRAFT CURRICULUM

Waldorf education is about teaching out of universal, human principles, whatever the subject and an orderly Education of *Head, Heart and Hands* is central to these principles.

However, handwork and crafts are to have a specific task within the context of the curriculum, namely to awaken creative powers which would find fruitful and useful application in as many ways as possible in later life and work.

The practising of handwork is not meant to provide just a pleasant past-time but to specifically help the young child to develop a healthy imagination and harmonise his unfolding will and feeling life. This is in order that in the older child, the teenager, the enhancement of these soul faculties will form the basis for an active thinking life and possibility to form sound judgement. Again and again Rudolf Steiner points out that such adult qualities as to form, for instance, sound judgement, to have a balanced thinking, depends far more on whether a child was taught to use his hands, his fingers in a right and practical way, than in later life the exercising of logical thinking.

The reason for this is based on one of the fundamental precepts of true teaching, namely that when we engage the child in physical, *practical activity*, such as handwork or Craft work, we are working on the ‘*soul spirit nature*’ of that child. However, when we address the ‘*soul spirit nature*’, for instance, in story-telling, the healthy results are to be found in the ‘*bodily organism*’.

It is consequently no less important for the handwork/Craft teacher to be familiar with the nature of soul life and the development of the child than for the class teacher. Both should work in accordance with how the child is at any time, how he or she perceives him or herself and the world.

The three phases of development from *play* in which the child experiences the *World is Good* (up to the age of 7), through the experience of *beauty* (the school child from 7 to 14) to the attainment of *truth* (the adolescent years) help the child transform what was play into the basis for his/her motivation in the realm of work.

This *Golden Path* in education forms the guideline in handwork as well. The younger child learns by play to fashion simple toys, developing what he or she makes out of stories. The handwork teacher then gradually leads the child to the awareness of colour and form in order to create artistic forms, to have a sense for what is beautiful. Later with the older child and the teenager, the sense for what is practical is awakened and developed out of the artistic way of working: by learning to respond to the materials, by the development of manual skills and the correct use of tools. That all articles made in handwork should express beauty in some form goes without saying. It is however, equally important that the functional aspect, the way to use the article is also apparent in the particular design given to the article. This is a new and objective discipline inherent in all practical

activities and is essential to all true Craft Practice.

What follows is an attempt to outline the essential elements and practice of the Formal Hand Work Curriculum. It is one with which we may be familiar however I believe due to changing circumstances of today could benefit from a ***rethink*** and ***adaptation*** into our present time.

Renewing The Craft Curriculum

In view of the increasing occurrence of many basic Learning and behavioural problems presented by children throughout the school are we not challenged to provide an education more consciously focused on the 'experiential'. An education that is artistic, practical and intellectually stimulating. Perhaps too much of our education is directed at the ***Thinking Man*** and rarely descends to creatively satisfy the ***Will Man***. The renewed Craft Curriculum is an attempt to lead the child /pupil on a path of education that ***Ascends*** from ***Below upwards*** it is essentially a path that offers an education of the ***Will***.

It would appear that if we are to address the lameness of the Will that is so apparent we would need to be more creative in adopting and applying a practical approach to our teaching in all classes throughout the school.

I have therefore taken the liberty to augment the traditional hand work curriculum with suggestions for a variety of practical activities that could be seen as part of a ***New Developmental Craft Curriculum***, see 'A Descent Into Matter'

Soft and Hard Handwork:

Some confusion has, unfortunately, arisen regarding the different areas of handwork.

Handwork refers to the soft material work using mainly unprocessed raw materials.

Handcraft includes clay, wood, paper, leather etc. and is mainly taught to children from 12 years onwards.

Craft is a specific type of work and only applies in Waldorf schools where pupils have already achieved a general knowledge and range of skills in the use of different materials and tools, which they now apply to a specific craft, such as weaving.

Hand Work

Children are first introduced to ***handwork*** by way of soft natural materials. Here, in response to the subtle direction of the teacher, the child creates out of his or her feelings, whilst being shown and guided how to care for the materials and the simple tools used. The sensitive use of colour plays an important part in the child's enjoyment of the handwork lessons: helping the child form a meaningful, personal relationship to colour can also serve to bring that child's feeling nature into harmony. This in turn can work beneficially on the breathing and blood circulation of the child.

Hand Craft

Later in *handcraft*, using harder materials, for instance various types of wood, stronger forces of will are needed. The limbs and the whole body are engaged in this activity. There is a difference in the experience of making soft toys, a stuffed animal for instance, to that of an animal carved out of wood. In the first instance, soft material, flat pieces of material, receive their nature from inside. In the case of carving an animal out of wood the hard material receives its nature from outside. Again in the first instance, the child makes manifest in the stuffing of the animal, the filling out processes in his or her own body.

In woodwork, however, a person works like the action of water, sculpting the rock over which it flows. A child is only really ready for this sort of activity from about the twelfth year on, after the child's formative forces have developed his or her body. Only then is it possible for the growing human being to harness these inwardly acting forces and work with them outwardly, fashioning his or her materials.

Craft Work

Finally, in *craftwork*, the adolescent should have a chance to find a growing sense of confidence and ability in the realm of work. Correspondingly, the desire to find where he or she can contribute something in the world around can awaken an interest in the practical affairs of life. (See further under the handwork and craft curriculum notes.)

To sum up, it could be stated that while all handwork engages the whole human being, it is essentially in the following ways that handwork affects a growing child:

- *it lifts motor activity to the realm of skill*
- *it transforms willpower into beauty of form*
- *it changes what would otherwise be an insignificant activity into a virtue.*

Only when the pupil, the craftsperson responds sensitively to the nature of his or her materials and the correct use of his or her tools, *is motor activity raised to the realm of skill*

Only in working artistically with design, colour and from *is willpower transformed into beautiful form.*

And only when these two aspects are combined in work that also allows the person to have a sense of fulfilment, a sense of true purpose in his or her work, can *what might otherwise be an insignificant act be raised to the status of a virtue.*

These then could perhaps be called the *Three Transforming Powers* of handwork, powers that are essential for the unfolding of true human development.

HANDWORK AND CRAFTS

CURRICULUM

WHY;

True education aims to serve the needs of the whole human being, **Head, Heart and Hands** are brought into a particular relationship with each other in the practice of handwork and crafts. In these lessons pupils have the opportunity to '**tangibly grasp**' the world and give expression to their latent creativity.

Handwork and craft activities not only serve to educate the pupils in the nature and processes involved with the different materials, the use of tools and equipment, etc., but there is also inherent the therapeutic aspect from which the pupils benefit.

For it is in the very nature of handwork/crafts to **Bring Order** and to **Bestow Order**. To bring order to the materials used and to bestow order upon the maker.

In the practice of ceramics, for instance, a potter not only leaves his imprint, his thumb print on the clay, but is also **inwardly impressed** by the creative process at work. By '**impressed**', is meant the formative element working to ' **Ground**' and give '**Shape**' to the newly released **Astral Body**, particularly so in the young person.

In addition to the educational and **formative** benefit that crafts can offer there is the definite element of manual skill training and for the older students a useful introduction to an experience of real work.

Apart from these benefits, the involvement in craft work offers the pupil the challenge to learn to work from the **conceptual** through to the **material**. In this process the pupil will be guided to experience and become conscious of exercising, at the hand of the work place, very human attributes, both on an emotional and intellectual level.

WORKING PRACTICE

1) PREPARATION

{Design -

CONCEPTUAL

{Ideation

Thinking activity

{Preparation of Material

{Plan ahead

2) ACTION – Process

The craftsperson brings his/her hands to bear upon the materials - workpiece, and works out of the mental picture that he/she has formed.

ACTIVITY

Practical Involvement

3) JUDGEMENT

As I proceed I exercise judgement as to the shape of workpiece. Forming element.

Engagement of Feelings

LESSON PLAN

Where possible younger pupils classes 1 - 6 will receive handwork lessons on a weekly basis, guided by the class teacher and practised at home.

From classes 6 - 12 the handwork and craft lesson take on a more formal approach with increasing time spent in the various craft workshops both indoors and outdoors.

The following curriculum is an indication of the Development the handwork curriculum can take and a brief description of the pedagogical relevance for each activity.

HANDWORK & CRAFT CURRICULUM

CLASSES 1-12

Nursery Class

At this age things that are done by the children are done in response, in imitation of what grown-up people do in their surroundings. In the case of the rag doll, it is better that we give the child a simple, knotted doll - one where the head piece is made by filling a silk cloth with a small bundle of wool tied around the neck, than to give the child a real look-alike doll to play with. For the child needs to exercise its powers of imagination, which it can better do with the rag doll, than the one that is realistic in every detail. The nursery class teacher also encourages the children to go outside to collect things, shells, cones, twigs, etc. These activities help the children to become acquainted with the form and the shapes of things. Imaginative arrangements of the things the children collect outside can then be arranged on a table to form a seasonal garden in which the child can play out its imaginations.

Class 1 - the 6 to 7 year old child

One of the first handwork activities that can be introduced is knitting, an activity for which Rudolf Steiner had particularly high regard concerning its pedagogical value (Stuttgart 1921). When we teach a child to knit or to make something, of course the thing he/she makes must have a purpose and a meaning. We are then working on the spirit of the child, and often more truly so than when we teach him subjects that are generally thought of as spiritual and intellectual’.

A child may learn to knit a simple potholder or a scarf for his/her doll. When a child has accomplished the basic techniques of knitting he/she could then be shown how to knit a simple animal form, which is then stitched, together and stuffed with wool to give it form. By knitting we introduce the child to mechanism, we bring the child into movement of his/her limbs and fingers and we train the power of attention for stitches are easily dropped. We are aware that the movements entered into whilst **knitting** are in the course of time to be interirised and reappear as healthy forces of **thinking**.

Children should be encouraged to experience in a **playful manner** the different qualities offered by materials coming from the **Three Kingdoms of Nature**, i.e.

Animal Kingdom - collect/gather wool for a variety of uses and having helped to make a **wooden drop spindle** use it to use it to spin. As important to Knitting is to introduce ‘Felting’

Plant Kingdom - Using hedgerow material make a **Free Form Nest Basket** for Harvesting or Easter Eggs.

Mineral Kingdom - Sand, Clay and Water, i.e. fashion a Water Course

Class 2 - the 7 to 8 year- old child

Knitting continues into the second year of school but in class 2 we introduce the child to ***crochet***. We do this by way of making small articles: a ball net, a tea cosy, perhaps a small cap. In this activity the, right hand is engaged differently from that of knitting. Here the one limb is allowed to work almost independent of the other. Already at this age the child should be encouraged to choose his/her own colour materials with which he/she wants to work. In the case of the potholder he/she could finish the edge with a blanket stitch using a coloured thread of his/her own choice.

House Building - as preparation for the House Building Main Lesson next year, make and build a small ***Tent*** using Felt techniques (especially the Feet) and suitable sticks gathered from a wood.

Class 3 - the 8 to 9 year old child

We continue crochet, making small articles, such as jackets, possibly a jumper. Knitting also continues, and by now a personal relationship to colour should be established. Form and design should be now encouraged to involve the child's own design, not only a copy of the article made by the teacher.

This brings to a conclusion those activities in which the child's main experience is in creating solid objects out of a single thread by the formation of loops. By now the children should have acquired a sense that things not only should look beautiful, but also be functional. They should practise design, a recorder bag, for instance, where the opening to the recorder bag is obvious from the design placed on the outside of the bag. The design could be done with simple embroidery stitches.

Land Crafts: In association with the Farming and Gardening this year there would be many opportunities to develop various traditional ***Rural Crafts*** Projects like building a ***Wattle and Daub*** construction. A ***Clay Oven*** using woven basket technique could also be incorporated in the building Main lesson. ***Man and Animal Main*** lesson provides many opportunities for ***creative felt*** work, it would be recommended that the wool for these actives should be sheared from sheep and not only bought in.

Class 4 - the 9 to 10 year old child

The 9 to 10 year old child places himself/herself more consciously into the world, he/she is now ready for bigger challenges. The pupil could perhaps be encouraged to make a simple shoulder bag by sewing suitably coloured bits of material together and embroidering the front side of the bag to a design of his/her own choosing one that expresses his/her particular growing personality. At this age practising cross-stitch in embroidery and braiding help a child to maintain an inner uprightness; these are outer activities that can accompany his awakening objective consciousness.

Norse mythology, out of this Main lesson the children are introduced to an Archetype in Thor we have, *The Blacksmith*. In an appropriate manner the children can be introduced to The Iron Age Pit Forge. They could be allowed to construct one and using Charcoal which they have made, light a fire and make a simple poker.

Class 5 - 10 to 11 year old child

By now on processes have reached down to the feet. In handwork the child may now learn to make simple articles of clothing, for instance, socks or gloves or possibly a hat. In the making of these articles the child becomes more aware, more consciously aware of the extremities of the body, of the feet, of the hands, the head, of the human form.

Felt and Leather could be used to produce a range of articles.

Whittling Wood - simple items using partly the natural shapes of *Green Wood*

Class 6 - the 11 to 12 year old child

Now a child is able to construct things in handwork in a much more conscious and living way. Until this time it was very much through the feelings that a child approached his/her handwork. Now he/she has become aware of the physical structure of man and animal, his/her work, handiwork can take on a more realistic nature. His/her interest and ability to participate in the world around him increases. This can be seen as a kind of balancing activity to the growing awareness of his/her own inner bodily nature, of his/her bones, and skeleton.

Wood Work (see separate Paper)

At this age formal woodwork lessons are introduced. For, as has been already mentioned the child has now available formative forces that once worked inwardly, informing his own organism, to work outwardly in fashioning his/her material. The hands now, not only give expression to the feelings, but are more consciously directed by the will.

Green Wood Work

To balance the work with seasoned and hard woods Projects in Green Wood could be continued. Concave and Convex forms can be explored in a variety of items.

Felt & Leather Project

A suitably challenging project for class 6 would be to make a pair of slippers using leather to form the soles, knitting or felting the upper part of the slipper in a suitably strong fabric.

Class 7 - the 12 to 13 year old child

Now that the pupil has a more conscious awareness of his/her anatomy he/she should be encouraged to hand-sew larger articles of clothing. Boys and girls can sew shirts or blouses or other articles of clothing. The boys may prefer to make a waistcoat. Apart from practical work done in this class they should now begin to learn about the making and processing of the materials they use, and how to recognise the different qualities of material.

Green Wood Work

Following or even better during the *Physics Main Lesson* where the *Basic laws of Mechanics* are introduced a suitable Project that combines many of the elements would be to construct the basic Green Wood equipment i.e. *Shaving horse and Pole Lathe*.

Class 8 - the 13 to 14- year old child

To counteract the broodiness at the time of puberty, pupils need to be drawn out of themselves. Introducing youngsters to wider range of skills can help them to re-establish their interest and confidence in practical affairs of life.

Apart from continuing hand-sewing techniques a suitable challenge at this age is to introduce pupils to *machine sewing*, starting with simple techniques, for example, hemming a tablecloth which can then be embroidered by hand or cutting out a pattern an apron, machine sewing the edges and stitching on a pocket.

Pupils should also learn to care for their clothes, how to wash and iron different articles so that the shrinking and running of colours does not occur.

All these activities can be related to certain elements of the *Nutrition, Health And Hygiene* Main lesson. So too could be building a *Clay Bread Oven and Baking Bread* that has been prepared as part of this lesson.

Building a meteorological station would be a suitable project coming out of the Meteorological studies, making a *Wind Mill* with *Cloth Sails* would incorporate many of the machine sewing skills described above.

Classes 9 and 10 - the 14 to 16 year old pupil

Pupils in the upper school start to express *new attitudes to life and work*. From this point on the *critical thinking* and *judgement* of the pupils should have a part to play in what they do and make. The younger child has executed his/her work out of his/her colourful feeling life, and in response to his/her love and respect of his/her teachers. Now the pupils come with their own ideas of what they wish to make, one has to allow the material to temper their expectations of what they can make. After puberty the young person takes more conscious notice of work. He/she begins to understand the meaning of work. He/she can start to respond to work, to the need of things to be done, being motivated now more from within.

The following are examples of the more formal Craft Curriculum, which really comes into its own within the context of the Upper School. A wide range of Traditional Crafts can be developed out of the general hand work and hand craft experiences of the former years. The example given for Wood Work illustrates the direction and approach that should be encouraged throughout all Craft Lessons in the Upper School.

Woodwork

A suitable project in woodwork for boys of this age would be to design and make a bookshelf to fit a certain, corner. This type of handwork challenge would allow for artistic design but also the practise of working accurately, where the shelf must fit the corner and hold the books. We should find - as many ways as possible to help pupils become conscious of form and its relationship to the function of the article that is made.

As has previously been suggested all items that are made should come into use. If this discipline has already been fostered further down the school then by now the pupils should be able to have a far more objective relationship with their work and appropriately engage in small scale Production work.

Handwork of all kinds, Textiles, Clothes, Leather, Paper Crafts, Basket-work, Ceramic and Metal work etc. should be made from the pupils' own design, the design should also be suitable for the purpose of the article.

Technology - it would be entirely appropriate that as pupils progress throughout the Upper School relevant equipment and Technology be used.

Class 11 & 12 - 16 to 17 years - 18 years

Introduction of Specific paper crafts i.e. paper making, box making, note-pads and books using traditional book binding methods. This is a very demanding Craft which can be suitably be prepared for by having already introduced Paper making in Class 9/10

Craftwork with the older Pupil - 'The Descent into Matter' - An Introduction to work

The principle aim of the Hiram Trust is to promote learning through first hand experience by developing the *classroom setting more actively and flexibly into the environment*. This involves a renewal of the Craft Curriculum and associated practical skills arising out of a developing relationship with the landscape.

A curriculum of *activities in association with Main Lessons as well as the Formal Hand Work*, for children within the Lower school as well as pupils in the Upper School, can be developed where a school consciously opens up to the potential of its environment. Many of the necessary materials can be responsibly obtained from their primary source within in the school grounds or nearby locality.

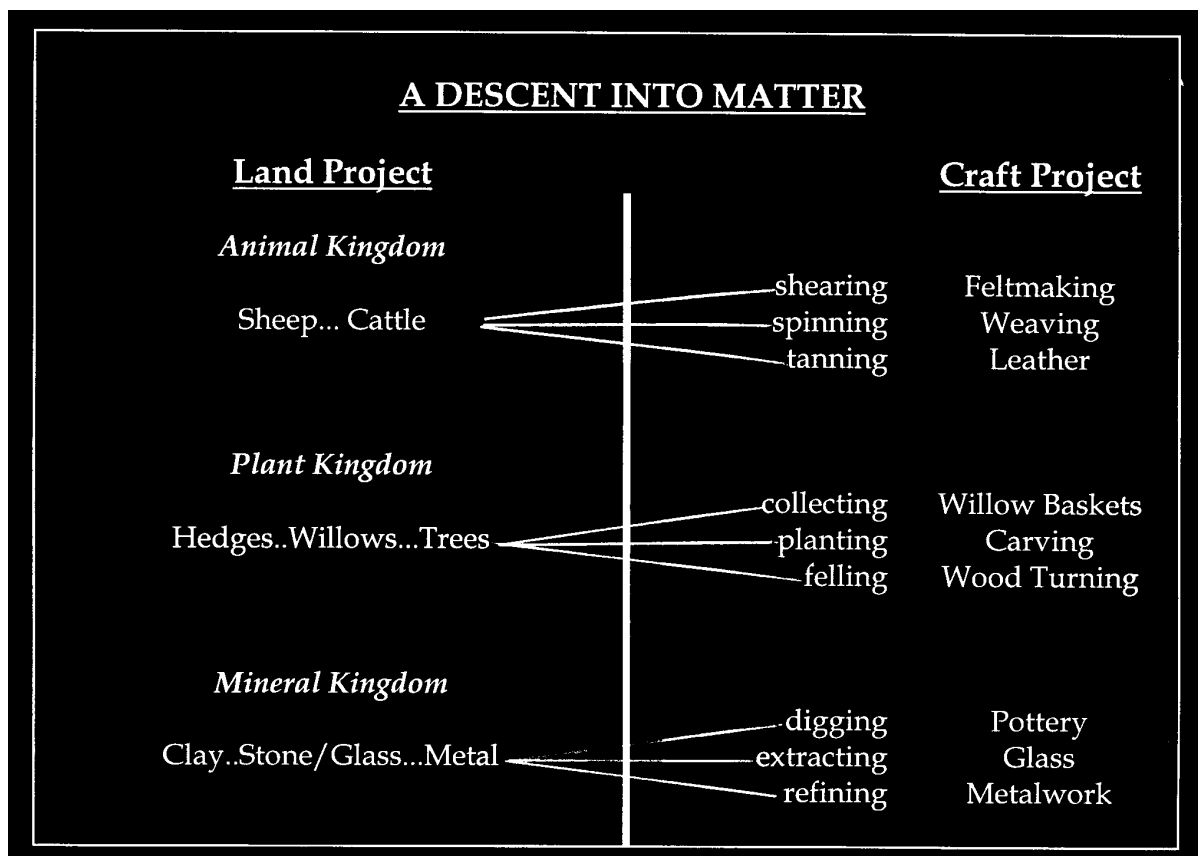
Increasingly it is evident that we need to provide the young person with the opportunity to exercise his *‘doing’- to tangibly grasp the world*. Appropriate to the adolescent *‘to catch him as he falls’* is to allow him to descend in an orderly fashion into a *Consequential Craft Curriculum*

A Curriculum where *Landscape, Craft and Science* are consciously integrated as the background to *technology* has much to offer the adolescent, in particular as a developing individual.

In our time, it is precisely in the encounter with the *Material World* that we can appropriately meet a world of *‘Process’*. In our overly sanitised society children need to play with and explore basic materials and processes, and likewise the adolescents of today need an appropriate challenge. One that will help to equip them with essential skills *to manage the practical affairs of life and to develop a moral sense of responsibility for the environment; both the natural and human*.

The following is a suggestion to evolving a *Consequential Craft Curriculum*, one that could be started within the context of the Upper School. Class 9 Pupils could be engaged in a multi-facilitated craft project namely to *Plan and Build their Out Door Craft Shelter*. This would be an ideal Project to introduce many of the Rural Craft Practices and ecological building techniques.

Due consideration would have to be given to Craft that may have a certain emphasis because of an abundance of a particular local resource. Though it should in our part of the world be possible to in the course of time to develop many if not all the Crafts indicated. Getting certain materials may be more easily facilitated by working closely with others in the locality, such as Kolisko Farm.



Craftwork has proved time and time again to be of enormous help in introducing Pupils to the realm of work. This threshold is particularly difficult in our time. Essentially the Will Forces need to be given equal opportunity to meet the world, making contact and Sourcing Raw Materials where possible will present the young person with an appropriate and rewarding challenge. What was for the younger child *‘learning through play’* must now become transformed into *‘learning whilst working.’*

We have of course to be *motivated to do, to work*. Once being motivated we create with our hands, in practising crafts the end product will inevitably fall short of the original ideal, there is always an element of imperfection in my work: which in turn gives rise in me to wanting to do better. And when I attempt to do better, at my work, my true morality expresses itself. It is just in the realm of craft work that the young person and adult can come near to this fundamental, human, Christian experience.

It is in the very nature of crafts that *our manual creativity bring ideas to expression*. Here we see the real meaning of work as that human activity that gives expression to individual creativity. Doing crafts offers an ideal opportunity for pupils to experience an essential motivating factor in all kinds of work; in that they can work in response to requests from local customers. When these two elements, of *creativity* on the one hand and *human need* on the other, come together the pupil can take real responsibility for what, he/she does in the workshop and may rightly experience that he/she has valuable contribution both in the social and economic life of his/her immediate environment.

Bernard Graves (diagramme after Aonghus Gordon – Ruskin Mill)